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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A.J.Ph.</i>	<i>The American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>A.J.S.L.L.</i>	<i>The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
<i>A.N.F.</i>	<i>Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi</i>
<i>A.S.N.S.L.</i>	<i>Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen</i>
<i>A.R.</i>	<i>Archivum Romanicum</i>
<i>B.H.</i>	<i>Bulletin Hispanique</i>
<i>C.J.</i>	<i>The Classical Journal</i>
<i>E.St.</i>	<i>Englische Studien</i>
<i>F.F.C.</i>	<i>Folklore Fellows Communications</i>
<i>G.R.M.</i>	<i>Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift</i>
<i>H.B.V.</i>	<i>Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde</i>
<i>J.A.F.</i>	<i>The Journal of American Folk-Lore</i>
<i>J.E.G.Ph.</i>	<i>The Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
<i>K.H.M.</i>	<i>Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm</i>
<i>Kl. Schr.</i>	<i>Kleinere Schriften</i>
<i>M.L.N.</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>M.L.R.</i>	<i>The Modern Language Review</i>
<i>M.Ph.</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>M.S.G.V.</i>	<i>Mitteilungen der Schlesischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde</i>
<i>N.M.</i>	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
<i>N.S.M.</i>	<i>Nuovi Studi Medievali</i>
<i>N.T.T.</i>	<i>Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift</i>
<i>P.M.L.A.</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>R.C.</i>	<i>Revue Celtique</i>
<i>R.E.T.P.</i>	<i>Revue d'Ethnographie et des traditions populaires</i>
<i>R.H.</i>	<i>Revue Hispanique</i>
<i>Rh.M.</i>	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
<i>R.L.C.</i>	<i>Revue de Littérature comparée</i>
<i>R.R.</i>	<i>The Romanic Review</i>
<i>R.T.P.</i>	<i>Revue des Traditions populaires</i>
<i>S.A.V.</i>	<i>Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde</i>
<i>S.S.N.</i>	<i>Scandinavian Studies and Notes</i>
<i>Z.D.A.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum</i>
<i>Z.D.Ph.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie</i>
<i>Z.F.S.L.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur</i>
<i>Z.N.V.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für niederdeutsche Volkskunde</i>
<i>Z.R.Ph.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie</i>
<i>Z.R.W.V.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für rheinische und westfälische Volkskunde</i>
<i>Z.V.V.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde</i>

CHAPTER XIV

MINERAL LORE, STAR LORE, COSMOGONIC LEGENDS

IT would be erroneous to suppose that plant and animal lore owe their existence to the mystery of life. On the contrary, it is very likely that the distinction between organic and inorganic nature is itself the consequence of mental processes of a fairly advanced nature, and the more or less veiled contempt with which missionaries of one of the higher creeds look upon savages primitive enough to revere dumb nature is therefore essentially a proof of their own ignorance of man's spiritual evolution.

The worship of rude stones is very widespread on our planet and, more important still, is clearly distinguishable at the base of religions which, in their later development, show no mean capacity for artistic beauty if not for reasoning intelligence. The Greek Hermes, to quote just one familiar example, was in his origins but a rude stone, and so was, in all probability, the Asiatic Kybele who in precisely this form was carried to Rome, in the latter part of the Second Punic War, and there worshipped, with the retention of her Eastern rites, down to the end of Paganism. Nor can the stone of Beth-El, anointed by Jacob, be altogether separated from this set of curious beliefs and practices.

Of a higher level, presupposing indeed some scientific outlook, however faulty to our minds, is the curious mineral lore as represented in the Mediaeval lapidaries.¹ The pseudo-science displayed in these compilations has, like most pseudo-sciences, an Oriental origin. A good portion of that lore was current in classical antiquity, as may be judged from the specimens given by pseudo-Aristotle, Pliny and other ancient authors of *mirabilia*. This ancient lore was transmitted to the Middle Ages, with numerous accretions of more recent Eastern provenance. The minerals treated are either well-known precious stones, which are credited with certain miraculous powers, such as that of making the bearer invisible, or of protecting him against fire or water, or of warning him against approaching dangers ; or else they are entirely fabu-

lous and have no more existence in reality than the Phoenix bird. To the latter group belongs the famous philosopher's stone, no doubt identical with the 'stone of hidden power', the *lapis exilis* of Wolfram.² Various stones even entered the Mediaeval pharmacopoeia as sure remedies against a variety of diseases the real character of which was quite as unknown to the Mediaeval physicians as were the mineralogical qualities of the stones in question. In the Near East matters have not changed materially, and the belief in the curative powers of certain stones is still a living force in those countries. In Europe this pseudo-science has left no trace except the symbolism of precious stones, according to which each stone symbolizes a certain quality of character and is linked up with the horoscope and the planetary signs still believed in by those who consider faith the better part of reason.

To presuppose a genuinely popular basis for the Mediaeval lapidaries would be as vain as to exclude such beliefs and superstitions from the domain of folk-lore on the pretext that they are obviously of learned provenance. Much the same state of things holds for the kindred domain of star lore. Obviously, two different strata can be distinguished with ease. On the one hand we have genuine star *myths* (to use this ambiguous term), i.e. tales about the heavenly bodies, usually of the aetiological type. On the other hand we have counterfeited star myths—witness the comet identified with the dead Caesar or the constellation called Berenice's Hair,³—the invention of court poets, and the planetary lore which formed the main body of astrology from antiquity down to relatively modern times.⁴ The latter has become popular in a certain sense, since the noble pseudo-science of Seni and Tycho Brahe has decidedly fallen, socially, and is now accessible to any farmer in the form of sixpenny booklets sold at fairs.

There is little need to go into the mass of astrological lore. The field is most interesting, extremely important from the standpoint of culture-history, and quite a discipline by itself, though intimately connected both with the history of religion and the origins of astronomy. Nor are modern scientific studies of it wanting. The genuinely popular star lore, however, deserves some mention, especially in this country, since the English reader may well ask what is left of the fancies of Max Müller even in the opinion of specialists who cannot claim to belong to the Anthropological School.

As one approaches the body of astronomical myths one gains at once an impression that these are in the main aetiological tales. The sun's light is quite different from the light of the moon; the sun shines by day, the moon and the stars by night. Most of

the stars are arranged in clusters which we call constellations. All these facts (and many others) suggest the question, Why? And in his usual way man has tried to answer these questions, not by scientific investigation and reasoning—these belong to a far later stage of his spiritual development—but by inventing a good story. Hence the many tales of a marriage of sun and moon, ending—like many human marriages,—if not in the divorce court, at least in mutual estrangement. Or, combining the phases of the moon with the host of the stars, man came to invent the jolly story, made famous by Heine, of how the old moon is broken to pieces by the *bon Dieu* and the stars made out of the fragments. If the constellation of the Pleiades reminds the peasant of a hen with her chickens, such fancy is perhaps not even particularly extravagant, and if the Milky Way is likened to a great pilgrim road, the notion, though perhaps an importation from the Orient, is yet understandable,⁵ and one might even argue that it could have arisen independently. Once such mythological fancies existed, it was a comparatively easy matter to transpose earthly figures, men, heroes, and even gods of the Olympian type, to the sky, the best example being the Greek Orion and the Norse *Toe of Aurwandil*.

The best proof of the essential correctness of my contention is furnished by the existence of numerous aetiological star tales which have nothing mythological about them. Thus a Basque legend will explain the constellation of the Dipper as follows ⁶:

Once upon a time there was a wealthy farmer who was robbed of a pair of his oxen by two thieves. He sent his servant in pursuit of the robbers; when the servant did not return he sent his servant girl after him. As she did not appear either, he sent his little dog; and a few days later when neither servant nor girl nor dog had returned, he went himself in search of them. Finding them nowhere, he began to curse and swear. As a punishment they were all, farmer, servants, dog and thieves, as well as the stolen oxen, converted into stars and lifted up into the sky where they are doomed to walk in procession until the day of doom. Thus arose the constellation of the Dipper; the oxen are the first two stars, the thieves the next two, whilst the servant, the girl, the dog and the farmer are the four stars forming the handle.

With this story should be compared the 'myth' reported by Hyginus ⁷:

The Athenian Icarius, having been taught by Dionysus how to grow grape vine, gave some of his wine to some shepherds. Having got drunk, they thought that he had poisoned them and killed him. His dog went to fetch Erigone, his daughter, and showed her the place

where the corpse was lying. In her despair she hanged herself, whilst the dog let himself die near his master's corpse. Then the gods put the three in the sky together with the wine cart. Erigone forms the constellation of the Virgin; the dog is Sirius, Icarus is the Cowherd, and the cart is the Dipper.

Now it may be admitted that in a polytheistic society such as that of the ancient Greeks, gods and heroes were more apt to be made the subjects of a catasterism than humble mortals such as the Basque farmer. Yet granting all this, we are still far from an astral mythology in the sense of Max Müller, E. Siecke, and their followers. By the process of a catasterism, just referred to, genuine gods *may* invade the heavens, and a similar process is even more obvious in the history of the Chaldaean astral religion in which ancient Mesopotamian and later even the Hellenic Olympians had to do service in the nightly sky. Yet there cannot exist the slightest doubt that in all these cases the astral connexions of such gods are secondary. We have no proof whatever that the reverse ever took place and that stars became anthropomorphic gods. We have examples of sun-gods, in Ancient Egypt, in the late Roman Empire, in Ireland, and among the Indians of Peru. Yet even there we are either dealing with an advanced civilization and an agricultural, stationary population, or—as in the case of Ireland⁸—with an obvious transposition of creeds from the Mediterranean.⁹ Nor is the case much different with the ancient Mesopotamian moon-god. An agricultural people, governed on the monarchical principle, will naturally look to the sun as the life-giving deity, and the moon may, temporarily at least, gain a certain importance from the fact that in the reckoning of time it precedes the sun and the fairly complicated solar year. But the chief claim of the moon mythologists,¹⁰ that a moon cult and a moon worship must in all cases have preceded a sun cult and a sun worship, is entirely unfounded and not apt to be substantiated in the near future.

Aetiologial myths constitute the overwhelming majority of the body of stories which formed the delight of the professional mythologist and which induced him to build up the most daring structures. As science advanced, the aetiologial myths lost credence and gradually disappeared, unless protected by some powerful religious system which had incorporated them for one reason or another. The eternal question, Why? so easy to put and so difficult to answer, can be proposed and has been proposed in all fields of human knowledge, in zoology and botany no less than in astronomy, or rather, these disciplines have arisen in answer to those questions. Yet the same question may be put,

and has been put, as to the origin of the visible universe, though not as to its *raison d'être* (no doubt because this would tax to the utmost the imagination of even the most fanciful of human beings), and the result is seen in the various cosmogonic myths which have come down to us.

A cosmogonic myth is simply an aetiological tale purporting to explain how the world was created or arose out of the Nothing or out of the Chaos.¹¹ The usual solution is the *a priori* assumption of a personal creator, a *τεχνίτης* who set to work, sometimes more or less diffidently, until he saw that what he had made 'was good'. The best specimen for this type is, of course, the Semitic myth as told in *Genesis*. The Iranian and Orphic myths stand fairly close, except that the dualistic system takes the place of the unitarian, and the Devil has as large a share in the creation as has the Deity.¹² The Greeks and the Scandinavians alone, it appears, started with a concept sufficiently free from theistic preconceptions, though neither managed to dispense altogether with the *τεχνίτης*. The idea of an organic Universe does not occur in pre-philosophic times, and that wonderful introduction of Pliny's *Natural History* would be unthinkable in any but the very highest of civilizations. In Western Europe one has to wait until the beginning of the eighteenth century to find anything approaching it in boldness of conception and grandeur of language.

One more caution is necessary. Aetiological tales of the ordinary type may be considered as the outcome of an individual brain, though diffusion no doubt often enough led to modification. The cosmogonic myths of the known world are systems and presuppose as a rule the harmonic co-operation of a multitude of brains. One need not go so far as Creuzer who everywhere saw ancient schools of philosophers and religious thinkers at work. Yet this much is certain, that we should possess neither the first chapters of *Genesis*, nor the body of Iranian creation myths, nor the Hesiodic theogony, nor even the corresponding chapters of the *Gylfaginning* without a certain body of priests or poets—or both—who not only invented aetiological tales of this type but organized and co-ordinated older material and above all expressed these conceptions in a language of literary beauty that cannot be spoiled even by translations into alien tongues. What is certain is that the fortune of such systems was not made by their scientific accuracy—that quality could recommend the book of *Genesis* only to a type of mind for which it was not written in the first place—nor by their purely dogmatic import, the rewards promised to the believer and the punishments threatened to the unbeliever—such rewards and punishments are nowhere men-

tioned either in *Genesis* itself or in the later books of the Old Testament—but solely by the poetic beauty of the text. And what is true of *Genesis* is equally so of the Hesiodic poem and of Snorri's fine and energetic, though simple, prose.

At the other end of the scale, as a sort of antithesis to the creation, stands the idea that the earth and the whole visible universe are bound to perish some day in the distant future.¹³ The psychological basis behind it (as behind the creation myths) is of course the all too earthly experience that everything must have a beginning and an end. Yet it is a noteworthy fact that quite a number of peoples have constructed hypotheses on the subject of the creation, whilst but few have thought it worth their while to ponder over the sorry fact that the beautiful show here on earth must some time come to an end. The ancient Israelites, though possessors of quite an elaborate creation legend, knew nothing about a world catastrophe. On the contrary, from Jahveh's solemn promise in *Genesis* ix. 11 sqq. it may be inferred that they held the optimistic view that the earth is going to last for ever, a view unfortunately not borne out by modern science. Even the Babylonians, with their theory of the 'Great Year' and its regularly recurring world-catastrophes whenever all the planets stand in the signs of Cancer and Capricorn respectively, cannot be said to have anticipated an end of the world for good and all. Their cosmogony allows us to suppose that after every catastrophe things were started afresh and went on as merrily as before.

The notion that after the end of the visible universe another and better world of everlasting bliss was taking its inception appears to be of Iranian origin and closely connected with the strange dualism peculiar to that country. Accordingly, it was the Iranians who elaborated the details of the coming catastrophe, pointing out the signs and omens of its coming, its nature, etc. A few of these, namely, the general wickedness at the end of time, the long and hard winter, and the final conflagration, promptly migrated westward, the first and third recurring in the Jewish and Christian apocalypses, the second and third in the Norse conception of the so-called 'Twilight of the Gods'. Nor is there any reasonable doubt about the fact that the so-called Anti-Christ and the Icelandic Surtr find their prototype in the Iranian Agramanyush. If in the *Völuspá* there arises another world of everlasting bliss, there is no need whatever to think of the heavenly Jerusalem; for precisely the same notion existed in Iran long before the advent of Christianity and probably migrated to the Germanic North together with the other eschatological elements.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XIV

¹ I. Evans, *Magical Jewels of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, particularly in England*, Oxford, 1922; Paul Studer and Joan Evans, *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, Paris, 1924; G. F. Kunz, *The Magic of Jewels and Charms*, Philadelphia, 1915.

² Cf. *Z.D.Ph.*, LIV, 277 sqq.

³ U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Reden und Vorträge*, Berlin, 1925.

⁴ Hugo Gressmann, *Die hellenistische Gestirnreligion*, Leipzig, 1925 (Suppl. 5 to *Der Alte Orient*); A. Maury, *La Magie et l'astrologie dans l'antiquité et au moyen âge*, Paris, 1877; F. Boll, *Sternglaube und Sterneutung*, Leipzig, 1918.

⁵ J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*,⁴ I, 296; III, 106, 280.

⁶ J. F. Cerquand, *Légendes et récits populaires du pays basque*, Pau, 1875-82, p. 19.

⁷ *Hyg. Fab.*, 130.

⁸ Cf. especially the recent book of Dr. R. S. Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, New York, 1927.

⁹ Cf. F. Boll, *Die Sonne im Glauben und in der Weltanschauung der alten Völker*, Stuttgart, 1922.

¹⁰ Ernst Siecke, *Mythologische Briefe*, Berlin, 1901; *Drachenkämpfe*, Leipzig, 1907.

¹¹ H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, Göttingen, 1895.

¹² Cf. O. Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1907-12, I, 1 sqq.

¹³ Gunkel, *op. cit.*; K. Ziegler u. S. Oppenheim, *Weltuntergang in Sage und Wissenschaft*, Leipzig, 1921; Gustav Neckel, *Studien zu den germanischen Dichtungen vom Weltuntergang*, in *Sitzungsber. d. Heidelberger Akademie d. Wissensch., phil.-hist. Kl.*, IX, No. 7, Heidelberg, 1918.